(d) whether the pearl fishing in the Bay of Mannar and its surrounding areas would not be adversely affected as a result thereof; and

(e) whether Government has given any consideration to the security concerns due to this canal?

THE MINISTER OF SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS (SHRI T. R. BAALU): (a) The approved estimated cost of the Sethusamudram Ship Channel Project is Rs. 2427.40 crores. As per the projections in the Detailed Project Report, subject to certain assumptions, the cumulative annual income and the cumulative annual expenditure from the project for the period upto the year 2038 is Rs. 21803.30 crores and Rs. 7468.30 crores, respectively.

(b) Vessels of size upto 30,000 DWT with full load and upto 50,000 DWT with partial load are expected to use the channel.

(c) an Initial Environmental Examination Study and a Comprehensive Environmental Impact Assessment and Techno Economic Viability Study have been conducted by the National Environmental Engineering Research Institute, Nagpur. In addition, an Oil-Spill Study has been conducted by Indomer Coastal Hydraulic Pvt. Ltd.

(d) There is no pearl fishing in Sethusamudram Ship Channel Project area, particularly from Adam's Bridge to Palk Bay/Palk Strait connecting with the Bay of Bengal.

(e) The Sethusamudram Ship Channel Project was approved by the Government in May, 2005 after obtaining all necessary clearances and inter-Ministerial consultations.

Utilisation of funds to check road accidents

1530. SHRIMATI SUPRIYA SULE: Will the Minister of SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether India has earned the dubious distinction of registering the maximum number of fatal accidents in the world-1.05 lakh in a year;

(b) whether the Union Government, State Government and National Highways Authority of India have been unable to spend the funds allotted for road safety over the last three years;

(c) whether the Centre has spent Rs. 43 crores out of Rs. 50 crores;

(d) the States which have failed to utilize the amount for road safety measures; and

(e) the measures and steps Government has taken to utilize the funds fully to check the accidents?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS (SHRI K. H. MUNIAPPA): (a) The World Road Statistics, 2007, which provides data for the year 2005 in respect of India, indicates that the number of persons killed in road accident in India was 94968, whereas the number of persons killed in road accident in China was 98738.

(b) The funds allocated to this Ministry for Road Safety are utilized for implementing the scheme-Awareness Campaign for Road Safety, Refresher Training to Heavy Motor Vehicle

Drivers, Setting up of Model Driver Training School and for the scheme National Highways Accident Relief Service Scheme under which the cranes and ambulances are procured and provided to the State/UT Governments and NGOs for post accident care. During the last three years, the funds allocated to this Ministry were partly not utilized.

(c) Out of the budget provision of Rs. 47 crores for Road Safety during the year 2006-07, an amount of Rs. 43.25 crores was spent.

(d) and (e) The funds allocated to this Ministry for Road Safety are utilized for implementing the schemes-Awareness Campaign for Road Safety, Refresher Training to Heavy Motor Vehicle Drivers, Setting up of Model Driver Training School and for National Highways Accident Relief Service Scheme under which the cranes and ambulances are procured and provided to the State/UT Governments and NGOs for post accident care. Except in the case of setting up of Model Driver Training School, the funds for road safety are utilized by this Ministry directly. In the case of Setting up of Model Driver Training School, so far the funds have been released for setting up of driver training schools in the 13 states all over the country. For timely utilization of funds, under all the schemes, the proposals are called for from various NGOs well in advance and other formalities such as the tender process for procurement etc. are being initiated in time.

Discovery of big hole in space

1531. SHRI RAJKUMAR DHOOT: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that NASA scientists have discovered a very big hole in space;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Indian scientists have analyzed its impact on the atmosphere;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE (SHRI PRITHVIRAJ CHAVAN): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Radio Astronomers of the University of Minnesota, US, have found the biggest hole ever seen in the universe. A survey carried out by the Very Large Array radio telescope in New Mexico did not detect any radio sources in a volume that is about 10 billion lights years away and a billion light years in diameter. The lack of radio sources means that there are no galaxies or clusters in that volume; and the void is empty of both normal matter and dark matter.

(c) No, Sir.

(d) Does not arise.

(e) Indian Scientists have not analysed this phenomenon as it has no impact on the earth's atmosphere.